

18 September 2013

**Statement of H.E. Ambassador John W. Ashe
President of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly,
at the Peace Bell Ceremony**

Excellencies,
Secretary General,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

We begin this year's General Assembly- our 68th session- as we have every year since 1981, with a tribute to peace which happens to be the very foundation upon which this organization representing our family of nations is built. The annual Peace Bell Ceremony is a poignant reminder of the overarching purpose of our work to ensure a more peaceful world. The ringing of the peace bell is also an evocative statement of purpose guiding our collaborative efforts towards meeting the agenda of the 68th session of the General Assembly.

This bell rings for peace at a time when so many across the globe are struggling to eke out a living, and begin their day in the dark and end their day in dark, hungry and terrified to face the horror of another tomorrow. This bell rings for peace at time when there is still conflict and bloodshed in many parts of the world., where there are tensions and violence born of traditional and long held divisions, or stemming from ethnic and/or religious differences.

As we hear this bell ring, let us remember that it was the United Nations General Assembly, that established this International Day of Peace in an effort that all member states will recognize and reflect upon the value of peace in world filled with everyday examples of bloodshed, violence and war. It is a day where any countries involved in conflict will have a day of ceasefire; where we will have a minute of silence in which we recognize and honour the victims of war and conflict wherever they are, and where we dedicate ourselves to work together to promote peace.

What makes this 2013 International Day of Peace unique is that for the first time, the Day has been dedicated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to peace education. Let us remember that education is a path to growth and development for citizens and societies, and that education that teaches the value of peace is a key preventive means of reducing war and conflict.

One of the world's great leaders, Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." It is therefore fitting that today we reflect on the role of education as one of the important building blocks upon which peace can be built. Education provides an opportunity to raise the veil of ignorance that blinds us to the path of decency, respect, tolerance and the interdependence of the human family, irrespective of country of origin, religion or ethnicity. No serious business leader would fail to optimise all the resources available to them. Yet, we do exactly that when we fail to give girls and women equal access to education, healthcare and opportunity. Let us remember that when we educate our girl children, and when we empower women and young people we create a more sustainable future - one which holds the real promise of reducing poverty and ill-health and of eliminating the scourge of gender violence.

The ringing of this peace bell today summons us all to work for the broader cause of human development to which people everywhere are entitled, and to build the peace in which all people and societies can prosper. Let us not forget that peace does not occur by happenstance, it is the product of the conscious and consistent effort of people of good will acting together for the common good. And let us remember that peace that is secured by hard work, dedication and commitment is a peace that is lasting and sustainable and very much needed in this world of ours.

Thank you.